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QUESTION OF ANTARCTICA

Report of the First Committee

Rapporteur: Mr. Parfait-Serge ONANGA-ANYANGA (Gabon)

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The item entitled "Question of Antarctica" was included in the provisional agenda of the fifty-first session of the General Assembly in accordance with Assembly resolution 49/80 of 15 December 1994.

2. At its 3rd plenary meeting, on 20 September 1996, the General Assembly, on the recommendation of the General Committee, decided to include the item in its agenda and to allocate it to the First Committee.

3. The First Committee considered the item at its 26th meeting, on 25 November 1996 (see A/C.1/51/PV.26).

4. For its consideration of the item, the Committee had before it the report of the Secretary-General (A/51/390).

II. CONSIDERATION OF DRAFT RESOLUTION A/C.1/51/L.55

5. At the 26th meeting, on 25 November, the representative of Malaysia introduced a draft resolution entitled "Question of Antarctica" (A/C.1/51/L.55), submitted by the Chairman of the Committee.

6. At the same meeting, the Committee adopted draft resolution A/C.1/51/L.55 without a vote (see para. 7).

III. RECOMMENDATION OF THE FIRST COMMITTEE

7. The First Committee recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of the following draft resolution:

Question of Antarctica

The General Assembly,

Recalling its resolution 49/80 of 15 December 1994, in which it requested the Secretary-General to submit information provided by the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties on their consultative meetings and on their activities, and on developments in relation to Antarctica,

Taking into account the debates on the question of Antarctica held since its thirty-eighth session,

Conscious of the particular significance of Antarctica to the international community, including for international peace and security, the global and regional environment, its effects on global and regional climate conditions, and scientific research,

Reaffirming that the management and use of Antarctica should be conducted in accordance with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and in the interest of maintaining international peace and security and of promoting international cooperation for the benefit of mankind as a whole,

Recognizing that the Antarctic Treaty,[1] which provides, inter alia, for the demilitarization of the continent, the prohibition of nuclear explosions and the disposal of nuclear wastes, the freedom of scientific research and the free exchange of scientific information, is in furtherance of the purposes and principles of the Charter,

Recognizing also the designation, in the Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty, of Antarctica as a natural reserve devoted to peace and science and the provisions contained in the Protocol regarding the protection of the Antarctic environment and dependent and associated ecosystems, including for environmental assessment, in the planning and conduct of all activities in Antarctica,

Welcoming the continuing cooperation among countries undertaking scientific research activities in Antarctica, which may help to minimize human impacts on the Antarctic environment,

Welcoming also the increasing awareness of an interest in Antarctica shown by the international community, and convinced of the advantages to the whole of mankind of a better knowledge of Antarctica,

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[1] United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 402, No. 5778.

Reaffirming its conviction that, in the interest of all mankind, Antarctica should continue forever to be used exclusively for peaceful purposes and that it should not become the scene or object of international discord,

1. Takes note of the report of the Secretary-General on the question of Antarctica[2] and the role accorded by the Secretary-General to the United Nations Environment Programme in preparing his report and also of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meetings, which took place at Seoul on 8 and 9 May 1995 and at Utrecht, the Netherlands, from 29 April to 10 May 1996, respectively;

2. Recalls the statement under chapter 17 of Agenda 21,[3] adopted by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, that States carrying out research activities in Antarctica should, as provided for in article III of the Antarctic Treaty, continue:

(a) To ensure that data and information resulting from such research are freely available to the international community;

(b) To enhance the access of the international scientific community and specialized agencies of the United Nations system to such data and information, including the encouragement of periodic seminars and symposia;

3. Welcomes the invitations to the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme to attend Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meetings in order to assist such meetings in their substantive work, and urges the parties to continue to extend such invitations for future consultative meetings;

4. Welcomes also the practice whereby the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties regularly provide the Secretary-General with information on their consultative meetings and on their activities in Antarctica and encourages the Parties to continue to provide the Secretary-General and other interested States with information on developments in relation to Antarctica, and requests the Secretary-General to submit a report which shall consist of that information to the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session;

5. Decides to include in the provisional agenda of its fifty-fourth session the item entitled "Question of Antarctica".

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[2] A/51/390.

[3] See Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, 3-14 June 1992 (A/CONF.151/26/Rev.1 (Vol. I and Vol. I/Corr.1, Vol. II, Vol. III and Vol. III/Corr.1)) (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.93.I.8 and corrigenda), vol. I: Resolutions Adopted by the Conference, resolution I, annex II, chap. 17, para. 17.105.